



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Revolution Park Sports Academy, located at 1225 Remount Road, Charlotte, NC 28208 at 6 p.m. on May 10, 2016

## PRC MINUTES May 10, 2016

### **ATTENDANCE**

#### **PRC Present:**

Elaine Powell, Chair  
Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair  
Tristan McMannis, Exec. Secretary  
Mary Foxx Johnson  
Doug Burnett  
Ed Barnhart  
Aubin Guinness  
Heidi Pruess  
Brian Cox  
Sterling Martin, Jr.  
Jim Garges  
Michael Kirschman

#### **PRC Absent:**

Abe Early  
Tony Arreaza  
**South Region 3 - Vacant**

### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Terri Stowers, Director of Community and Recreation Center Services, welcomed the Park and Recreation Commission to the Revolution Park Sports Academy (RPSA), a unique facility offering a wide variety of recreational programming, including boxing and wrestling. Terri recognized Ali Gitt, RPSA Facility Manager, who introduced her staff and invited the PRC to take a tour of the facility following the meeting.

Chair Elaine Powell recognized the important role recreation centers play in the lives of youth.

## **Presentations:**

### **Pearle Street Park Plan Presentation:**

Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, introduced Tedd Duncan, landscape architect with Stewart to present the current proposed redevelopment plan for Pearle Street Park and seek the endorsement of the plan from the Park and Recreation Commission.

The presentation shared the following information regarding the proposed park plan. (**NOTE:** This PowerPoint presentation is contained in the May 10, 2016 PRC minutes binder, **section 4a**, housed in the Director's office. The presentation can also be viewed by clicking on the following link: [Pearle Street Park Proposed Plan](#))

- The heaviest programming in the park is currently soccer and baseball by the athletic organizations of the Charlotte Junior Soccer Association and Myers Park Trinity Little League. These organizations have invested financially towards park improvements and maintenance. Their programming utilizes up to 100 parking spaces on the old surface left from the demolition of Mid-Town Sundries inside the park and at the Realtors Association. Both of these parking options will no longer be available once Pappas Properties develops the adjacent property and the park redevelopment removes the current parking inside the park. (This area cannot be resurfaced for parking due to its location in flood plain.)
- The proposed park plan as presented would:
  - Gain approximately 1 acre in size from a land swap with the adjacent Charlotte Housing Authority (currently under negotiation) and small parcels from the City of Charlotte and Charlotte DOT.
  - Continue to accommodate current programming in the park.
  - Replace current casual parking in the park along Kenilworth with a promenade and water features.
  - Incorporate bike and pedestrian connectivity with LSC GW and into uptown under and through the I-277 loop.
  - The Pappas Properties development will include the Pearle Street Parkway extension; adding additional on-street parking, but also cutting out a small portion of the park. Because of the Pearle Street Parkway extension, the tributary running through the park will need to be shifted in order to relocate the ball field.
- The proposed land swap to increase the size of Pearle Street Park is under negotiations and would include land currently owned by the CHA and land from the Baxter Street Park.

Much discussion followed with the prominent concerns of the Park and Recreation Commission being:

- **Parking:** A point of concern among the Commissioners was the need for adequate parking opportunities for baseball and soccer programming by current users in the park. While on-street parking will ultimately equal around 110 spaces, it is doubtful this will suffice. The Department is reaching out to neighboring landowners for possible shared parking agreements on Saturdays and for special events.

The proposed park plan was presented to the Central Park Region Advisory Council at a recent meeting. They also had concerns surrounding adequate parking opportunities.

- **Sell of Park Property - Pearle Parkway Extension:** There was much concern over the Pearle Parkway Extension alignment, which cuts into the park, leaving a remnant of park property in the proposed Pappas Properties development. Pappas would purchase this remnant from the County for approximately \$1.4 million. This money would go back into Pearle Street Park to help fund the redevelopment plan. However, the concern by several of the Commissioners was of setting a precedence of selling park property.

Director Garges offered some additional insight regarding the proposed alignment of the Pearle Parkway Extension. The extension and connection with Baxter Street has always been a part of the long-range plan for greenway and community connections. The layout of the road shifted slightly with the Pappas Properties development, but Director Garges said it was important, especially in urban areas, to work with development in order to provide the best park possible for people. However, questions remained as to why the road extension could not be moved out of park property.

- **Sell of Park Property - Baxter Street Park/CHA Land Swap:** Negotiations are underway for a land swap with the Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA). This land swap would increase the size of Pearle Street Park (as indicated in the proposed park plan presentation) and make it possible for the CHA to expand on the current Baxter Street Park site (a 2.8-acre park). The Charlotte Housing Authority would purchase any Baxter Street Park property not included in the land swap from the County and the money put back into Pearle Street Park to help fund the redevelopment plan.

Like the remnant that will be sold because of the Pearle Parkway Extension, the concern is with the sell of park property.

- **CHA/HUD Request Re: Land Swap:** The Park and Recreation Commission expressed concern with the urgency of a recommendation when the proposed park plan hinges on the CHA agreeing with and receiving permission from HUD to move forward with a land swap. Peter Zeiller and Jim Garges and Tedd Duncan responded:

Peter Zeiller said that a complex set of negotiations and agreements are underway with the attorneys and staff of City, County, CHA and Pappas Properties regarding the CHA land swap and that while he could not say with absolute certainty the swap would go through at this point, he felt confident that it would. CHA must submit a request to HUD for approval for the land swap. A response should take approximately 90 days for the transaction to be authorized, hopefully in July.

Director Garges said that the Department and all of the players involved (City, County, Pappas Properties, CHA) must have a plan in place that will work and a time line in order to keep the project moving forward.

Tedd Duncan said that it was important for the CHA, in making the application to HUD, to have the comfort that conceptually the other partners have approved the proposed plan. The CHA request to HUD should be going forward in the next 3 to 4 weeks.

- **Stream Restoration – Pearle Street Park:** Based on the proposed park plan, the tributary in Pearle Street Park will need moving in order to make room for the ball field. This will be treated as a stream restoration, but has not been approved by Storm Water. Meetings are planned for County Storm Water and Dave Canaan to discuss with City Storm Water. This

will need approval in order for the proposed plan to accommodate baseball and soccer programming. Director Garges does not foresee any problems.

Chair Powell shared pictures taken at Pearle Street Park to give the Commissioners a better view and understanding of the park layout and the proposed changes, including the tributary in question.

- **Park Funding – Infrastructure Funding:** Peter Zeiller from Economic Development shared that approximately \$2.5 million towards funding for the \$4.2-million-dollar park project will come from the sale of the remnant property as a result of the road alignment, sale of property as a result of the CHA land swap and approximately \$960,000 in park improvements by the developer for the road extension and greenway. There will be a funding gap that the Department will have to address.

Pappas Properties will fund the construction of Pearle Parkway Extension and the greenway. Pappas will be reimbursed over the next 10 years through a Tax Increment Grant.

The Commissioners also heard from the public:

**Rick Rayburn, Board Member of Myers Park Trinity Little League and Charlotte Jr. Soccer:**

Mr. Rayburn expressed his support of the proposed park plan and confirmed he has participated in numerous meetings with staff, the developer and other users to reach the current plan. Mr. Rayburn emphasized the fact that the baseball and soccer fields fitting into the proposed park plan are contingent upon the land swap with CHA and the rerouting of the tributary in the park. He also emphasized that parking continues to be a concern and reminded all that they are willing to invest in a parking solution. Mr. Rayburn expressed his concern over funding for the park plan and felt that funding should be part of the deal with the County and City.

Director Garges confirmed that the Department would prefer to complete this park project along with the development and agreed the \$4 million plus park cannot be funded from the remnant sales. Funding, the CHA land swap and addressing the sale of the park remnant with the Diocese will all be part of upcoming meeting conversations.

**Isaac Applewhite:** Mr. Applewhite offered encouragement to the Park and Recreation Commission and said that Pearle Street Park was the first African-American park in the city and as such means something to many in the community. He hoped the PRC would make the right decision. Mr. Applewhite also wanted to know the proper procedure for requesting a name change of a Park and Recreation facility.

**Rich Little, President of Myers Park Trinity Little League:** Rich Little expressed his approval of the proposed park and said their passion for the park comes from not only being users of the park but also developers. They built the baseball field and invested in the lighting, but as a non-profit organization, their greatest concern is to have fields on which kids can play. He also expressed concern that, should the plan and timeline for the redevelopment of the park be disrupted or delayed, funds received for Pearle Street Park could be redirected to other projects.

**Debbie, Charlotte Jr. Soccer:** Debbie's main plea was for the plan to include 40 – 50 parking spaces in order to provide safe, reliable and convenient parking for the Pearle Street Park users.

**Wade J. Finger, Managing Director at Pappas Properties:** Wade Finger expressed his support of the proposed park plan and reminded all that as the developer of the Metropolitan, which enabled the development of the greenway, they are sympathetic to the needs of the stakeholders. He also said they hopes for the simultaneous transaction of all that is necessary for the entire connectivity and the land swap.

Chair Elaine Powell asked that the PRC take action on the proposed park plan. She felt it was important that the Commission, as an advisory board, take a position and provide the BOCC with all opinions and comments. Discussion ensued:

Commissioner Barnhart expressed his reservations on taking action and said that he would be more comfortable if the PRC has a separate meeting for further discussion. Director Garges said that he would be happy to answer all questions, but action was needed on the part of the PRC. He encouraged the PRC to give their honest opinion, even if it differed from the Department's position. Their position will move forward with the project and it will be up to the BOCC to take the action they feel is appropriate.

Commissioner Bryant asked if Pappas Properties had given any consideration for providing/allowing for park parking since last discussed at the April PRC meeting. Wade Finger responded that they have not modified their plan to accommodate public parking. Parking will not be allowed for park patrons in the main parking deck.

Commissioner McMannis asked if he was "hearing" that the PRC's main concern was the shaving off the green space and setting a precedence of selling parkland.

Commissioner Cox responded it was a big concern for him and suggested that, since Director Garges said that the road alignment would not move, the remnant should not be sold but remain as green space.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the Department would begin the project without funding for the entire project and thus "phase" in the completion over time. Director Garges responded if the park were to be built in phases, the baseball diamond and soccer field would be the first priority along with the redirection of the tributary.

Director Garges suggested that the PRC take a position, include their contingency items, and include a list of everyone's concerns to go along with it for inclusion in the BOCC presentation.

Commissioner Cox asked Director Garges if he was going to recommend approval of the project to the BOCC regardless of the PRC's position. Director Garges said he was. Commissioner Cox said he felt undervalued. Director Garges said that much time has been spent sharing information and seeking input from the PRC and citizens and that their opinions are valued, but ultimately he is responsible for providing the County Manger and the BOCC with his best recommendation for the park.

Commissioner Pruess expressed her approval of the plan, but felt any action by the PRC should include a contingency of developing a strong parking agreement with the CHA.

Commissioner Burnett asked about the timeline for the presentation to the BOCC. Peter Zeiller responded that the overall project with deal points would go before the Economic Development Committee the first Tuesday in June (June 7, 2016). The Economic Development Committee will

make a recommendation on that day of whether to send it to the BOCC for approval on June 21, 2016 to authorize the County Manager to negotiate and execute all the contracts necessary for the project.

Commissioner Guinness pointed out that the need for funding for Pearle Street Park could possibly place the PRC in the position of having to advocate for additional funding. This would mean pulling this park project out of the queue, a practice that has been discussed by the PRC at previous meetings. The consensus of the Board was that it is not appropriate. Director Garges responded that the Department does try to stick to the queue unless an opportunity comes up to leverage tax dollars and then a decision must be carefully made.

Chair Powell expressed that she was not in favor of selling parkland but felt that in this case, with the connectivity and stream restoration, it was a good opportunity to really shape Pearle Street Park, protect natural resources, have nature areas for children and athletic fields in an urban environment.

Commissioner Burnett said that not only was selling the Pearle Street Park remnant one aspect before them but also said that the CHA land swap meant the permanent loss of the 2.8-acre Baxter Park.

Chair Powell felt that a document should go forward to the BOCC expressing the opinions and viewpoints of each Park and Recreation Commissioner.

Commissioner Barnhart restated that he felt more dialogue was needed on this issue, but as that was not going to happen, he expressed his concern again of selling parkland and setting precedence for the future.

Commissioner Martin expressed his opinion that he felt part of the PRC's obligation is to provide the best park possible and in the case of Pearle Street Park it may require selling the remnant. He also said that while he was not in favor of selling parkland, he felt every request in the future would need individual consideration. He agreed that the opinions of each Commissioner should go forward to the BOCC.

Commissioner McMannis expressed his opinion that that if parking arrangements cannot be made with CHA or the remote parking lot, that the park plan reconsider options for including 30 to 40 parking spaces in the park.

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Martin to endorse the Pearle Street Park plan as proposed with stream restoration, athletic fields and full funding and contingent on Park and Recreation staff continuing to pursue additional parking possibilities, which was seconded by Commissioner McMannis. The motion carried 6 to 4 with Commissioners Pruess, Martin, Powell, McMannis, Bryant and Johnson voting for the motion and Commissioners Barnhart, Burnett, Guinness and Cox voting against the motion.

(NOTE: A position statement will go forward to the BOCC)

#### **Update on Center City Real Estate Disposition (Brooklyn Village):**

Dennis LaCaria, Assistant to the County Manager, shared a presentation on the Brooklyn Village Development to provide the PRC with the process, bring them up to speed, talk about next steps

and opportunities for involvement from them going forward. The presentation covered the following:

**Brooklyn Village Parcels:** The proposed development would include the following properties:

- Board of Education Center – Conveyed to the County in 2008
- Marshall Park – Conveyed from the City to the County for the purpose of Brooklyn Village Development
- Walton Plaza – Jointly owned by CMS and the County

**Guiding Principles:** The County and the BOCC are going to keep the process as public and transparent as possible and therefore guiding principles have been developed as follows:

- Long-term economic impact
- Proven development partner(s)
- Engage residents and key stakeholders
- Greatest possible immediate financial return

**Process Overview:** As follows:

- Phase I: RFQ
- Phase II: RFP Response – Limited to three firms:
  - Conformity
  - CitiSculpt
  - Crescent
- RFP Evaluation
  - 40%: Redevelopment Approach
  - 30%: Financial Offer and Terms
  - 10%: Relevant Experience and Qualifications
  - 15%: Financial Soundness and Capability
  - 5%: Interview (held on March 30, 2015)
- Finalization
  - Evaluated by the Steering Committee and HR&A Advisors
  - BOCC will receive final staff presentation and will select a finalist with whom staff will enter into negotiations

(NOTE: This presentation is contained in the May, 2016 PRC Minutes Binder, **Section 4b**, housed in the Director's office. It can also be viewed at: [Brooklyn Village Development Process](#)).

There was much discussion which resulted in the following information and concerns:

**Brooklyn Village RFP's:** Three developers were selected for evaluation. All proposals had to include certain requirements by the County, including a park with a minimum acreage of 1.6 and community engagement plan. This 1.6-acre requirement was a baseline requirement and came from the Spectrum plan that was approved prior 2008. Once a developer has been selected and approved by the BOCC, negotiations will begin for a firm development plan.

**PRC Stakeholder Involvement:** The PRC were assured that this process was just beginning. Once the developer is selected, the PRC will be involved as major stakeholders for input on the park size and the various opportunities for connectivity in the final development plan.

**PRC Concerns:** The Commissioners expressed several concerns:

- Disappointment that PRC input was not sought prior to the RFP process

- Hope that the development will recognize the history of Brooklyn Village and past promises.
- Concern of going from a 5.4-acre park in 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward (Marshall Park) to a 1.6-acre park.
  - Dennis LaCaria said that the tradeoff would be a smaller park, but one that was the anchor of Brooklyn Village and activated on all sides, unlike the current Marshall Park.
- Referencing the position statement submitted to the BOCC by the PRC advocating for a minimum 5-acre park in Brooklyn village (May 10, 2016 Agenda Item 11b3), concern was expressed that it will be very difficult to have the developer increase the park size since the RFP required a minimum park of 1.6 acres.
- The PRC felt strongly about the importance of providing an appropriate size park in 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward.
- Strong feelings were expressed regarding the importance of preserving parkland for now and for the future.
- Feelings of it being “too late” to make a difference.

### **Appointments – Advisory Councils –Applicants**

#### **Sr. Citizen AC:**

**Motion was made** by Commissioner McMannis to reappoint **Bettie Faulk** to a first full term, expiring 6/2019, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

### **Director’s Report**

Director Garges reported on the following:

**Budget:** The County Manager’s recommended budget will be presented on May 26 and the budget public hearing will be June 2.

**Open Streets 704:** The event was very successful and was featured in Creative Loafing. The next Open Streets event will be October 23, 2016.

**Memorial Stadium Update:** The County is looking at the possibility of a public/private funding opportunity for the redevelopment of Memorial Stadium with the Charlotte Independence, the Charlotte Regional Visitor’s Authority and the County. Redevelopment of Memorial Stadium will ensure that it not only continues to function as it does currently but will also have expanded functionality to include professional soccer and lacrosse. The following points were shared:

- Need approval from the City Council and the BOCC to move forward on the redevelopment plan.
- Input by the PRC and public input from the Historic Landmarks Commission, CPCC, the Elizabeth neighborhood and other stakeholders.
- Preserve historic significance as a WWI memorial as well as recognition of all armed forces through the American Legion.
- Will come back with a synthetic field to support all activities.
- Working with a new architect that specialized in stadiums. To increase the field size, the wall will be dismantled and reconstructed.
- 10,000 seat stadium in a lower bowl. An upper bowl could be added in the future.



**Waymer Center:** The BOCC approved funding for the renovation. The plan removed the classroom portion and replaced it with an open air pavilion. However, the community wants the classroom. This will require approval of more funding from the BOCC.

### **PRC Chair Report**

**PRC Retreat Impact:** Since the PRC Retreat, Chair Powell said she spoke at a grand opening for the first time.

**Pearle Street Park:** Chair Powell asked everyone to submit their written comments regarding the Pearle Street Park vote to be included in a statement going to the BOCC.

### **Consent Items**

**Motion was made** by Commissioner Pruess to approve all consent items, including the PRC Minutes of April 12, 2016 (with e-mail amendments), which was seconded by Commissioner McMannis and approved unanimously.

### **PRC Reports and Requests**

Commissioner Bryant: Shared that there would be a **Mental Health Walk** at Park Road Park on Saturday, May 14, 2016 from 9 – 12. Has also received great feedback on the Open Streets 704 event.

Commissioner Martin: Expressed his appreciation to Chris Matthews and staff for providing a **memorial to Roy Alexander**. The dedication took place on May 7, 2016 at West Branch Nature Preserve and included a beautiful sign and plaque commemorating all his work.

Commissioner Barnhart: Each Commissioner had been provided with a letter and supporting documents from Hermes Goudes, an advisory council member of the South Park Region Citizen Advisory Council, addressing **CMS deposition plans for “surplus” property**, which Mr. Goudes felt could negatively affect Park and Recreation and the community as a whole. Commissioner Barnhart felt it was important that this information be addressed to make sure the Department was aware of CMS’s plans should they be interested in acquiring any of these properties. Director Garges informed the PRC that the Department had been made aware of these properties early on in the plans at which time the Department and Real Estate Services evaluated all of the properties for potential park use. A letter was sent to CMS Superintendent Ann Clark to ask that those properties be removed from the surplus list or lease them back to the Department. **(NOTE:** Documents provided can be viewed at the following links:

- [Hermes Goudes E-Mail Letter](#)
- [CMS DNA Policy](#)
- [CMS PPT](#)

Commissioner Cox: The PRC **SPLRF Committee** met and discussed land acquisition, disposition, funding, etc. The committee would like to be involved in these issues as much as possible to be better advocates to the BOCC.

Commissioner McMannis: The Senior Citizens Advisory Council recently participated in a volunteer project to build a hydroponic garden structure at the Tyvola Senior Center. The center is also up for

renewal of accreditation as a Senior Center of Excellence which the facility was renewed for another 5 years.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.